

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSM-03 CIAE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 IO-13
MCT-01 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02 OC-06 CCO-00 ACDA-12
HA-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 DOE-15 SOE-02 DOEE-00
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O R 211340Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7191
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 1519

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION, MARCH 21 AT 1200 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 1487 (O R 201125Z MAR 78)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. BY LATE MARCH 20 THE ISRAELIS WERE IN CONTROL
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OF ALMOST ALL OF SOUTH LEBANON UP TO THE LITANI RIVER, ABOUT ONE-
FIFTH OF THE COUNTRY'S TERRITORY. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR REPORTED A
CONVOY OF 31 IRAQI TRUCKS HAD TRANSITED SIDON ENROUTE TO
NABATIYAH. FALASTINE AL THAWRA EDITORIAL INDICATED THE PLO WILL
CONTINUE TO RESIST THE ISRAELIS BY USING GUERILLA TACTICS.
ACCORDING TO DATT AND OTHER SOURCES, ISRAELI F-15 FIGHTER
PLANES HAVE OVERFLOWN LEBANON AND OTHER ISRAELI AIRCRAFT HAVE

DROPPED AMERICAN-MADE CLUSTER BOMBS AROUND TYRE. PRESIDENT SARKIS CALLED UNSC RESOLUTION 425 A "VIRTUAL GUARANTEE" FOR THE COUNTRY. PARLIAMENT ADOPTED A RECOMMENDATION CALLING FOR SPEEDY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNSC RESOLUTION, BUT SOME CHRISTIAN POLITICIANS HAVE CRITICIZED PARLIAMENT'S ACTIONS. MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS ASSAD RIZK CLAIMED THE GOVERNMENT WOULD EVICT THE REFUGEES ILLEGALLY OCCUPYING APARTMENTS WITHIN TEN DAYS. END SUMMARY.

2. MILITARY SITUATION.

A. BY LATE MARCH 20 THE ISRAELIS WERE IN CONTROL OF ALL OF SOUTH LEBANON UP TO THE LITANI RIVER, EXCEPT FOR A NARROW STRIP OF LAND AROUND THE COASTAL CITY OF TYRE AND THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMP AT RASHADIYAH SOUTH OF TYRE. THE BEIRUT PRESS QUOTED ISRAELI DEFENSE MINISTER EZIL WEIZMAN AS SAYING THE IDF WOULD NOT TRY TO OCCUPY TYRE OR RASHADIYAH. DATT SOURCES SAY THAT LEBANESE FROM TYRE CONTACTED THE IDF IN ABASSIYAH TO DISCUSS ISRAELI INTENTIONS. THE IDF REPORTEDLY TOLD THE LEBANESE THAT THE "500 PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS STILL IN TYRE" COULD DEPART, BUT MUST LEAVE THEIR WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT BEHIND.

B. THE IDF NOW OCCUPIES ABOUT 2,000 SQUARE KILOMETERS, OR ONE-FIFTH OF THE TOTAL TERRITORY OF LEBANON. THE ISRAELIS CONTROL TWO OF THE THREE BRIDGES ACROSS THE LITANI: THE KHANDALIYAH AND CONFIDENTIAL

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THE QA'QA'IYAT. THEY HAVE SO FAR LEFT OPEN THE THIRD BRIDGE, THE QASIMIYAH, ON THE COAST ROAD NORTH OF TYRE.

C. THE ISRAELIS ARE CONTINUING CLEAN-UP OPERATIONS AND CONSOLIDATION OF THEIR POSITIONS IN THE SOUTH, BUT THERE HAS BEEN NO NEW MAJOR GROUND MOVEMENT OF FORCES SINCE MARCH 19. ISRAELI AIRCRAFT, ARTILLERY AND NAVAL GUNS HIT THE TYRE AND RASHADIYAH AREAS ON MARCH 20. DURING THE EVENING OF MARCH 20, NUMEROUS ISRAELI AIRCRAFT OVERFLEW SIDON AND FLARESHIPS ILLUMINATED THE AREA, BUT NO STRIKES WERE REPORTED.

D. ISRAELI ARTILLERY ALSO HIT PALESTINIAN POSITIONS IN THE ARQUB, WHERE THE PLO RESPONDED BY FIRING ROCKETS ON METULLA AND KIRYAT SHMONEH IN NORTHERN ISRAEL, ACCORDING TO Wafa. ISRAELI ARTILLERY IN THE EAST ALSO HIT THE TOWN OF SHWAYYA, 'AYN QINYA AND THE OUTSKIRTS OF HASBAYYA, ACCORDING TO VARIOUS SOURCES.

3. IRAQI TRUCK CONVEY.

ACCORDING TO L'ORIENT-LE JOUR, EYEWITNESSES REPORT A CONVOY OF 31 IRAQI TRUCKS AND 15 SYRIAN VEHICLES TRANSITED

SIDON ON MARCH 20 ENROUTE TO NABATIYAH. THE EYEWITNESSES GUESSED THAT THE TRUCKS CONTAINED MUNITIONS AND ARMS, BUT COULD NOT CONFIRM THIS BECAUSE THE TRUCKS WERE COVERED. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR ALSO SPECULATED THAT A SMALL NUMBER OF IRAQI VOLUNTEERS MAY HAVE ACCOMPANIED THE CONVOY. BEGIN COMMENT: A 150MAN UNIT OF THE IRAQI-SPONSORED ARAB LIBERATION FRONT (ALF) HAS BEEN IN SOUTH LEBANON FOR SEVERAL MONTHS. THE REPORTED NEW IRAQI VOLUNTEERS MAY BE MEMBERS OF THIS UNIT. END COMMENT.

4. FALASTIN AL THAWRA EDITORIAL.

A. ON MARCH 20 AN EDITORIAL IN THE OFFICIAL PLO NEWSPAPER, FALASTIN AL THAWRA, SAID THE PALESTINIANS WOULD CONTINUE CONFIDENTIAL

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TO RESIST THE ISRAELIS BY USING GUERRILLA TACTICS: "IN THE FACE OF THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION, ONLY FIGHTING, STEADFASTNESS AND CONFRONTATION CAN BE OF ANY USE. IT IS FIGHTING IMPOSED ON US WHICH LEAVES US WITH NO CHOICE . . . WE WILL GO ON FIGHTING BECAUSE THE ENEMY IS INVADING SOUTH LEBANON". (Wafa THE SAME DAY REPORTED THE "JOINT FORCES" WERE LAUNCHING GUERRILLA ATTACKS BEHIND THE ENEMY LINES, AND L'ORIENT-LE JOUR CITED A FATAH OFFICER AS SAYING THE PLO HAD LEFT AGENTS IN ISRAELI-OCCUPIED VILLAGES WHO WOULD SURFACE AND CARRY OUT MILITARY OPERATIONS.)

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 1519

B. FALASTIN AL THAWRA ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT THE LACK OF ARAB
SUPPORT DURING THE ISRAELI INVASION HAD DEMONSTRATED TO THE PLO
THAT: A) THE STEADFASTNESS AND CONFRONTATION FRONT WAS MEANINGLESS;
B) THE ARAB STATES WERE UNWILLING TO HELP THE PALESTINIANS WHEN
THE CHIPS WERE DOWN:

--"THE SILENCE OVER THE INVASION AND OCCUPATION OF THE SOUTH
ON THE PART OF THE STEADFASTNESS AND CONFRONTATION FRONT IN FACT
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NULLIFIES THE VERY EXISTENCE OF THIS FRONT, FOR SOUTH LEBANON
LIES IN THE VERY HEART OF THAT FRONT, AND THE PALESTINIAN
REVOLUTION IN SOUTH LEBANON IS THE VANGUARD AND ARM OF THE
ARAB NATION." (THE STEADFASTNESS AND CONFRONTATION FRONT,
FORMED IN TRIPOLI ON DECEMBER 2, CONSISTS OF SYRIA, ALGERIA,
SOUTH YEMEN, LIBYA, AND THE PLO.)

--"WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO ASK QUESTIONS, WHEN WE HEAR NOTHING BUT
WORDS AT A TIME WHEN WE NEED ARAB BULLETS, SOLDIERS, TANKS
AND PLANES. AND WHY ESCAPE TO THE CORRIDORS OF THE UNITED
NATIONS AND THE SECURITY COUNCIL. IT IS THE DUTY OF THE ARABS
TO TAKE PART IN THE DEFENSE OF THEIR LAND, IN ORDER TO CONVINCE
THE WORLD OF THEIR JUST CAUSE."

5. STATEMENT BY PALESTINIAN MILITARY SPOKESMAN.

AS REPORTED BY Wafa, A "PALESTINIAN MILITARY SPOKESMAN" SAID
IN BEIRUT ON MARCH 20 THAT "THE ENEMY HAS MADE OF THIS WAR
A TESTING GROUND FOR ALL THE WEAPONS WHICH WERE SUPPLIED TO HIM
AFTER THE OCTOBER WAR BY THE USA." THE SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THE
ISRAEIS FOR THE FIRST TIME HAD USED IN SOUTH LEBANON:

--AMERICAN-MADE F-15 FIGHTER PLANES

--AMERICAN-MADE CLUSTER BOMBS

--ISRAELI-MADE MERKAVA TANKS AND KFIR FIGHTER-BOMBERS.

DATT SOURCES CONFIRMED THAT CLUSTER BOMBS WERE DROPPED IN THE TYRE AREA MARCH 19. THE SAME SOURCES REPORTED THAT F-15'S HAVE ENTERED LEBANESE AIRSPACE, BUT HAVE CARRIED OUT NO STRIKES.

6. GOL REACTION TO ESOLUTION 425.

A. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, PRESIDED OVER BY PRESIDENT
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SARKIS, MET MARCH 20 TO DISCUSS UNSC RESOLUTION 425. PRESIDENT SARKIS TOLD THE CABINET THAT THE SECURITY COUNCIL FOR THE FIRST TIME HAD STRESSED RESPECT FOR THE SOVERIEGNTY, INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF LEBANON. HE SAID THIS REPRESENTED A "VIRTUAL GUARANTEE" FOR THE COUNTRY.

B. PRIME MINISTER SALIM AL-HOSS TOLD THE MINISTERS THAT THE ISRAELI "AGGRESSION IS CONTINUING, AND WE ARE AS A CONSEQUENCE GOING TO ADVISE THE SECURITY COUNCIL." HE SAID THE GOL WOULD NOT MAKE A NEW FORMAL COMPLAINT, BUT WOULD SIMPLY KEEP THE SECURITY COUNCIL INFORMED.

C. CHRISTIAN LEADERS HAVE GENERALLY REMARKED THAT UNSC RESOLUTION 425 DID NOT DEAL ADEQUATELY WITH THE PROBLEM OF THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON, WHILE MUSLIM LEADERS HAVE GENERALLY ENDORSED THE RESOLUTION (SEPTTEL).

7. PARLIAMENT MEETS.

A. PARLIAMENT ON MARCH 20 ADPTED A RECOMMENDATION CALLING FOR SPEEDY IMPLEMENTATION OF UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 425 AND CONDEMNING ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF THE SOUTH AS A "GRAVE CONTRAVENTION OF ALL NATIONAL RIGHTS AND THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW." (PARLIAMENT HAD MET ON MARCH 17 BUT AFTER ACRIMONIOUS DEBATE HAD BEEN UNABLE TO AGREE ON A RESOLUTION ON THE ISRAELI INVASION.)

B. PRIME MINISTER AL-HOSS ADDRESSED THE DEPUTIES AND SAID AT THIS CRUCIAL MOMENT THE LEBANESE SHOULD PUT THEIR DIFFERENCES ASIDE AND WORK FOR NATIONAL ACCORD. THE PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH WAS WIDELY PRAISED BY MOSLEMS AND CHRISTIANS.

C. ALTHOUGH SPEAKER KAMAL ASSAD CLAIMED THE VOTE WAS UNANIMOUS, DEPUTY TONY FRANJIYAH AND FOUR MEMBERS OF HIS BLOC WALKED OUT OF THE MEETIG BEFORE THE VOTE; THEY PROTESTED
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THAT THE RECOMMENDATION DEALT WITH ONLY "PART OF THE PROBLEM."
IN A SIMILAR VEIN, FORMER PRESIDENT CAMILLE CHAMOUN
TOLD THE PRESS THAT HIS NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY CATEGORICALLY
REJECTED PARLIAMENT'S RECOMMENDATION, BECAUSE IT "DOES NOT
TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY AS WE SEE IT."
CHAMOUN EXPLAINED THAT THE RESOLUTION COVERED ONLY THE
SITUATION IN THE SOUTH AND DID NOT TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION
THE ARMED PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN THE REST OF THE COUNTRY.

D. THE PHALANGE PARTY POLITBURO MET AND APPROVED THE
RECOMMENDATION, BUT SAID THAT PARLIAMENT SHOULD MEET NEXT
WEEK TO DISCUSS THE PALESTINIAN ARMED PRESENCE IN LEBANON
AS A WHOLE AND COME UP WITH A RECOMMENDATION ON THE MATTER.
THE POLITBURO ALSO COMPLAINED THAT THE GOL WAS MAKING EVERY
EFFORT TO HELP SOUTH LEBANESE REFUGEES FROM SOUTH LEBANON,
BUT HAD DONE NOTHING COMPARABLE FOR THE REFUGEES FROM DAMOUR
AND OTHER CHRISTIAN TOWNS.

8. REFUGEES AND CASUALTIES.

A. MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS DR. ASSAD RIZK TOLD THE PRESS
ON MARCH 20 THAT REFUGEES WHO HAD OCCUPIED BY FORCE APARTMENTS
IN BEIRUT AND SIDON WOULD HAVE TEN DAYS TO LEAVE THEM.
OTHERWISE, "ALL LEGAL MEANS WILL BE USED" TO EVICT THE REFUGEES.
COMMENT: DESPITE THE MINISTER'S ASSERTION, THE GOVERNMENT
WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE UNABLE TO EVICT MANY REFUGEES IN
THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. END COMMENT.)

B. ACCORDING TO THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS, IN THE TOWN OF
TYRE EIGHT CIVILIANS WERE KILLED AND 185 OTHERS WOUNDED DURING
MARCH 17-20. ONE RESIDENT OF TYRE TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT 30
CIVILIANS WERE KILLED DURING AIR RAIDS ON MARCH 17.

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C. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR REPORTED ON MARCH 21 THAT BINT JUBAYL,
TIBNIN, JWAYYA, AND AL-BAZIRIYAH HAVE BEEN ALMOST COMPLETELY
DESTROYED BY THE RECENT FIGHTING.
PARKER

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